

THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management

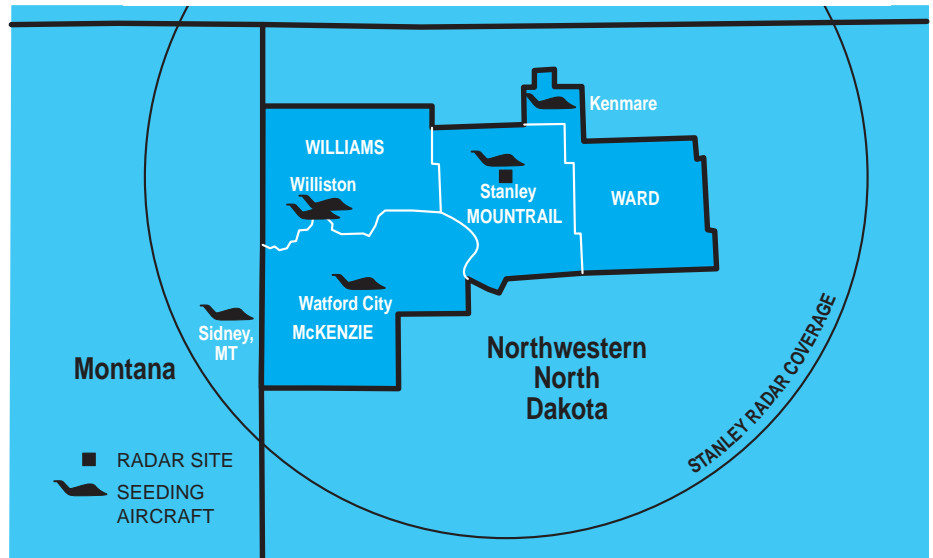
Williams County says YES to cloud seeding

By Darin Langerud

During the 1993 Legislative session, a provision for the implementation of a temporary weather modification authority was added to state law. The intent of the provision was to allow an interested county the opportunity to conduct a trial weather modification program for the purpose of determining whether or not the program was beneficial to that county. In 1997, the Williams County Water Resource Board (WCWRB) petitioned their county commission to conduct such a trial. The commission agreed, and Williams became the fourth county in the District II target area of the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project that summer.

Over the last four years Williams County, along with McKenzie, Mountrail, and Ward counties, has conducted the cloud seeding project for purposes of hail suppression and rain enhancement from June through August. The WCWRB acted as the local authority for the program with funding granted by the county commission through the board. Project operations were conducted as weather conditions required, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Meteorologists guided operations from the radar base in Stanley, ND, and aircraft were located in Williston (2), Watford City, Stanley, Kenmare, and Sidney, Montana.

The conclusion of the 2000 project marked the end of the trial period. The county commission placed the question of whether to



District II target area of the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project.

continue the project on the ballot in the November general election. Williams County voters responded with an overwhelming mandate to continue the project by an 80 percent to 20 percent margin. The vote established a ten-year authority to conduct cloud seeding operations in Williams County, with the program up for renewal in 2010 and every five years following.

In January, the county commission will appoint five members to the newly-created Williams County Weather Modification Authority (WCWMA). The WCWMA will be the local entity responsible for the conduct of the cloud seeding project in Williams county. Each of the counties involved in the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project has such a board, and it is through this local, grass-roots support that the program has served its constituents.

Through the action of Williams

County citizens on November 7, the benefits of the cloud seeding program will continue to be felt. Benefits such as a 45 percent reduction in crop hail losses; a 6 percent increase in wheat yields; 10 percent more summer rainfall; and more than \$7 million additional annual economic activity countywide.

The solidification of Williams County's participation in the NDCMP, and the interest it may spur in other northwestern counties, further strengthens North Dakota's program and its 40-year history of operations over western North Dakota. ■

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